DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 198 126 SP 017 528

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TITLE Cathartic and Socialization Functions of "Teacher Bars" (Findings).
PUB DATE Apr 80
NOTE 33p.: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Boston, MA, April 7-11, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Catharsis: Community Attitudes: Conflict Resolution: *Drinking: Group Dynamics: Interaction: Peer Counseling: *Peer Relationship: *Social Behavior: Stress Variables: Student Teacher Relationship: Teacher Attitudes: *Teacher Behavior: Teacher Role: Teacher Stereotypes

ABSTRACT

This paper is based on 42 unstructured, tape-recorded interviews, conducted over a period of three months, with teachers who frequented a teacher bar. It was hypothesized that conversations teachers have with each other in an ambience of informal collegiality serve a cathartic function. Through their interactions, teachers helped one another by creating a secure environment for the cathartic release of emotion for those who felt they needed it. The most frequently discussed topic of conversation at these relaxed meetings was the relationship between teachers and their students. A second topic was the dichotomy between community and student attitudes and expectations of somewhat rigid and formal teacher behavior, and teachers' perceptions of themselves as typical human beings. It is suggested that the restrictive culture of the school inhibits teachers from relating to their students and peers from a genuine humanistic base and forces them into stereotyped roles. (JD)

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# Cathartic and Socialization Functions of "Teacher Bars"

(Findings)

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Session 15.6, Division A, prepared for presentation at the American Educational Research Association's Annual Meeting, Boston, Massachusetts, April 7-11, 1980.

SP017528

In trying to intellectually comprehend the dynamics of the teaching-learning process, it is easy to overlook the affective side of this interaction, particularly with respect to the teacher. Despite clear implications for both preservice[1] and inservice[2] training, comparatively little attention has been focused on the affective outcomes of the role of teacher on the person. Recent headlines reporting widespread stress and burn-out among teachers as an occupational group suggest that this is an area that should not be overlooked.

The research reported here is part of a larger field study in which five researchers observed and interviewed teachers in a bar room setting over a three month period. The researchers had learned that two to three hundred teachers were congregating at a particular bar called O'Keefe's every Friday after school, and it seemed possible that this setting might provide some interesting insights into the teaching occupation. Not being familiar with the setting, and recognizing that this assumption might be a source of bias, an initial phase of data collection was limited to two general questions: (1) Who are the teachers who go to O'Keefe's? (2) What do they do there?

The preliminary data, collected through observation and fifteen unstructured interviews satisfied the researchers that the phenomenon at O'Keefe's was probably related in more than a superficial way to the job of teaching, and was worthy of further investigation. Two more specific questions emerged which served as the focus for a second phase of data collection: (1) What meaning does the setting at O'Keefe's have for the participants? (2) Do the participants themselves view the setting as relating in any way to the job of being a teacher? This second phase



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of data collection involved tape recorded interviews with 42 teachers. A more detailed description of the methodology employed is presented in the separate methodology section of this paper.

The Setting

At 3:15 on Friday afternoons the lights would dim and contemporary music was piped over the sound system at O'Keefe's. A bar seventy-five feet in length stretched along almost the entire wall on the right as you entered. Approximately twenty high round tables were strung along the opposite wall which was punctuated by shallow alcoves. Plenty of wooden barstools, temporarily neatly arranged along the bar and around each of the tables awaited the teachers who began to arrive singly and in small groups about ten minutes later.

The earliest arrivals from schools nearby often staked out tables for themselves in the alcoves opposite the bar which provided a semblance of privacy and a focal point of activity later in the evening for larger groups which would spill out onto the wide floor between the tables and the bar. Later arrivals tended to cluster at the bar, again with groups extending into the open space down the center of the room. Clusters which formed in this open area tended to gravitate toward one side or the other, although there was considerable milling about. By 4 pm five bartenders and two waitresses busily served two-for-the-price-of-one drinks to several hundred teachers who came from schools as far as twenty miles away.

The selection by the teachers of O'Keefe's as a teacher bar reportedly occurred almost randomly, although the determining factors teachers identified included inexpensive drinks, adequate parking,

and a "respectable atmosphere." By February and March, when the research was conducted, the phenomenon of two to three hundred teachers meeting there regularly after school on Fridays was firmly established. Teachers described the process of selection as one in which faculties from different schools informally scouted various bars at the beginning of the school year, finally settling on a particular bar on the basis of a spontaneously developed reputation as one which other teachers frequented. Some suggested, reasonably enough, that faculties from larger schools made the final determination, with the smaller schools following their lead.

Teachers expressed enjoyment over the unpredictability of the selection process, and expressed doubts that O'Keefe's would be the place to go next year. Most teachers were able to specifically name last year's bar, which they said had declined in popularity because of difficulties with parking. Although some believed there were other teacher bars in the area, no one could name one specifically. A few teachers expressed the opinion that O'Keefe's had in fact already peaked in its popularity and that a new search had begun. A noticeable decline in the number of patrons did not become evident however, until local competing merchants complained to police about the overflow parking at O'Keefe's and a few cars were towed away.

First Phase of Data Collection - Who Goes? When? and What Goes On?

The teachers frequenting O'Keefe's were predominantly under 35 years of age, and considerably more than half were single. Older married teachers stopped by but not as regularly, and when they did

appear they did not stay long, giving family responsibilities as the reason for leaving. Sometimes younger administrators showed up for a single drink, perhaps buying a round for their faculties. Part of the folklore of the setting was that an administrator from a large nearby school district had come to O'Keefe's and mingled with the teachers for the one and only time several days before he was publicly named to the superintendent's post by the school board.

Individuals were fully aware that most of the people at O'Keefe's were also teachers who had stopped in after work. With few exceptions, teachers reported that teaching kept them busy most weeknights, and that Friday was the only night they went out to a bar. Some said that they came to O'Keefe's only on special occasions such as before or after vacations, or to celebrate a birthday, which was confirmed for a small group through observation. The majority of teachers, however, saw stopping at O'Keefe's as a regular prelude to the weekend. Some illustrative examples are presented below:

> I don't get out all week. So I stay home, I do my lesson plans, I do my research, whatever I have to do, my grading And when it comes to Friday, it's time to forget it all and just have a good time.
>
> I don't come to O'Keefe's regularly, on a regular basis. I usually come like if its before a vacation, or like today our student teacher, it was her last day, and my birthday's Sunday. So, you know, on a special occasion like before Christmas or something, you come because usually the kids are pretty crazy and you feel like getting out of it and getting away, and forgetting about it before you go home. That's why I come.
>
> I don't come here any other day. It's a nice way to start off the weekend. I like teaching, but I look forward to the weekend.

> Friday night's the end of the week. You can sleep tomorrow. You don't have to worry about getting up in the morning, and you don't have to function tomorrow if you don't want to.

Conversations at O'Keefe's naturally covered a wide range of subjects, but the most frequently and consistently discussed topic was the relationship between teachers and their students. In this first phase of data collection, of 15 responses to the question, "What do you talk about when you come here?", 9 focused directly on students or the dealings teachers had with students. Three teachers reported that although they occasionally talked about school, they mainly talked about other things. Three stated specifically that they only talked about things unrelated to school. One teacher said that other teachers complained, "alot about not getting backing from the administration."

When asked for examples of the kinds of things they talked about, it became clear that much of the conversation among those who discussed students involved the sharing of frustrations and successes, suggesting a cathartic rather than a problem solving function. Perhaps because it often involved the recollection and expression of unpleasant feelings, the catharsis itself was viewed as a somewhat unpleasant necessity to be gotten over with in order to proceed with other things. This attraction/aversion toward the cathartic process is demonstrated in the following responses to the question, "What do you talk about when you come here?":

> Initially you talk about kids, but then you go on to other things. You kind of get it out of your system.

> Ideas, how you relate to students, that kind of thing, but you try not to make a business meeting out of it.

> You sometimes definitely try to change the subject. You get tired of it (talking about students) after awhile. Sometimes not, but you know, sometimes.

The function of a cathartic release was also suggested by the manner in which some teachers responded to the question, "Can you give a specific example of what you talk about?", which tended to be rambling rather than focused on details. For example:

> Like especially if they don't do their homework, or they're constantly failing on their tests and they don't want to do anything about it, and you want to help them and you can't. They just won't listen to you. You want to help them and it just goes in one ear and out the other.

> You usually talk about the good things that happen and the bad, and it's really a combination of both. Like somebody said something really nice, or they came out with a really good answer on a - you know, 'my kids did really well in this or that,' or, 'somebody really behaved,' or 'that kid isn't as bad as they told me he was going to be.'

> Drugs, health, sexuality, how kids should be brought up, how they should be raised, how they should be spoken to, how they shouldn't be spoken to, what they should be taught, what they shouldn't be taught, what their parents should do...

Conversations such as these were reported and appeared to occur more frequently at the beginning than at the end of an interaction among teachers. One teacher claimed that there were definite unspoken limits to the length of time anyone could talk about or would listen to school related subjects. When asked what would happen if someone insisted on continuing to talk about students beyond this limit, he said that people would just walk away. A male teacher suggested that it was primarily the less experienced teachers who talked about students, and that the older teachers mainly listened. A female teacher said that she considered talking about students at O'Keefe's to be "unprofessional."

This first phase of analysis led to the conclusion that somewhere near 80 percent of the teachers at O'Keefe's engaged in dialogue with other teachers about their relationships with students. The researchers developed a working hypothesis that the conversations teachers had with one another served essentially a cathartic function. This function, which was most pronounced and acceptable at the beginning of an interaction, was viewed as a somewhat disagreeable necessity tolerated for a short time, and was considered by some as an indication of inexperience.

## Second Phase of Data Collection - The Meaning of the Setting and the Job of Teaching

Having established more firmly that the phenomenon at O'Keefe's was related to the job of teaching, and having developed the working hypothesis that the interactions among teachers served essentially a cathartic function, the second phase of data collection was begun. The researchers sought to answer two questions: (1) What meaning does the setting have for the participants? (2) Do the participants view the setting as being related to their jobs as teachers?

## The Meaning of the Setting

Forty-two responses to the question, "What does it mean for you to be here at O'Keefe's?", were recorded on tape. The responses were transcribed and classified according to their content into five categories of meaning:

| | |
|---|---|
| Cathartic Release | 11 |
| Personal Friendship | 7 |
| Camaraderie | 14 |
| Understanding | 6 |
| Justification | 4 |
| | 42 Total Responses |

Consistent with earlier indications suggested by the initial phase of data collection, over 25 percent of the teachers (11) referred to a cathartic release of emotion in their descriptions of the meaning the setting had for them personally. The teachers talked about "tension," "frustration," "pressure," and "build up" accumulating during the week. For some, the release at O'Keefe's was pleasant, for others, less so. One male teacher described the feeling of being at O'Keefe's as, "just a chance to take your coat off and go, 'ahhh'." A young woman, representing another extreme, however, said, "I feel like dancing, aggression, get it out, tensions. Why am I doing this?" This cathartic function is evident in the following illustrative examples:

> Just to let off. Teaching is, has a lot of tension to it. By the end of the week you're ready to let go. It's an easy way of letting go, I guess.
>
> You come to O'Keefe's, you have a few drinks, and you loosen up. You release everything that's been bothering you all week. You forget about it. You have a good time. If you just stayed in, it would be bottled up.
>
> Release some pressure. It's the time of the year and the season where it feels like it's changing, you know, the moods. It's getting warm, the kids are acting more active. You have to put more out towards them, the kids you know, when they start acting that way.

> It's to release some pressure. It's to relax you, and you can forget about everything and talk about all the people who get fresh with you.

A number of teachers (7) mentioned personal friendship as the meaning the setting had for them. Typical examples of this response are:

> There are alot of people here that I know from the job.
>
> When I come here I want to see some friends.
>
> If I didn't know the people who were going to be here, I would't come.

In the amicable climate at O'Keefe's a young woman said she felt free to ask people to go skiing or shopping with her, something which she felt unable to do at work. She also believed that having a good time off the job, "helps to establish trust," and made working together at school easier. Friendships established on the job or cemented at O'Keefe's evidently were quite strong, and is clear in the response of a former teacher:

> I haven't been teaching for the past couple of months so I come to see old friends, people I've talked with. I come to see how things are. Just to keep old ties together.

Although personal friendship may been most important for some, twice as many teachers (14) referred to a more abstract Camaraderie. Camaraderie is in a sense related to friendship, but extends to a larger identification with the faculty as a whole, or other teachers in general. Teachers made reference to this sort of broader identification with responses such as:

> There's a kind of camaraderie. You meet people and they're from other schools. You really have the same thing in common with them.

> I know that almost everybody here is a teacher, or I would say about 80 percent of them. But I don't think I know hardly anybody here. I have very little contact with them. But once in a while you bump into somebody at the bar or whatever, and you find out that you're both teachers, and all of a sudden you've got an instant camaraderie.
>
> We have a common ground which leads us to talk about other things.

The need to be with other teachers outside the role of teacher, furthermore, is quite strong:

> I would be more tempted to come here than any other bar because I know more teachers will be here.
>
> I don't drink anymore, I just come here to socialize.
>
> I look for people who work where I work. When I see somebody who comes through this door from where I work, I like that. That means something.

This ambience of informal collegiality apparently served as an ideal opportunity for the induction of new teachers into the faculty group and into the larger network of teachers in the area. As in the case of personal friendship, membership in the faculty group was seen as difficult to establish, and acceptance by the group was difficult to express while at school. This is evident in the following examples:

> You know when you're in a new place, it was hard for me at the beginning because I didn't know what kind of a staff they were. But within a week I found out. I mean they were coming up to me, and I felt I was part of the whole staff because they would say, 'Hey, we're going to O'Keefe's on Friday. Why don't you come along?' I thought, 'Hey, they're pretty nice.'
>
> I'm new to the district. I'm new in the area, and I don't really know alot of people, and this is nice atmosphere to be in, a very comfortable atmosphere.
>
> I'm new to the area and to me it's an opportunity to get out and to know the people in the area. I have no other opportunities to meet people.

The setting at O'Keefe's also provided a safe supportive atmosphere of understanding (6) from other adults who shared the same meanings and beliefs about the job of teaching. Teachers reported the importance of this understanding to them, and clearly felt that such sympathy was unavailable from people outside the profession:

> Because they work in the same environment, the same place as you, so they understand your grievances. They know the day-to-day hassles, they know what the administration that you work under is like, the working conditions and all, And for that reason, you can relate to the people that are around you, more so than if you were to go out with someone you didn't work with.
>
> That's the biggest reason I come, it's because other people understand what I'm talking about. Like when I can complain about a kid, they understand exactly what I'm going through. It's not like my boyfriend listening to me and having his perception which is entirely different.
>
> It's difficult to talk about kids with somebody who doesn't deal with them because it's a totally different world. To talk about what's happening in a classroom to somebody who is in business is a whole different thing.

In some cases, even spouses were apparently unable to provide the understanding that teachers needed at the end of the week:

> One thing I'll never do is take my problems home with me from work. I hate it when people do that.
>
> If you come here and you talk about it and you get it out, then you don't go home having to talk about it with other people who really don't understand what you're talking about. Talking about things that really bug you at school, like the kids, or the administration, or things like that. The best way you can talk about those kinds of things are with other teachers when you're not in school. And I found it a better means for me to get it out, and I won't go home and complain about it all the time. If I do it now, you know, I get it out and over with.

A few teachers (4) reported that they used other teachers at O'Keefe's as sounding boards for getting justification for actions

they had taken or planned to take. In one case, a teacher utilized the colleague group in a therapeutic manner, seemingly to help absolve herself of guilt:

> I just had an incident where one of my emotionally disturbed groups, the kid is, gets, very physical. And for no reason at all he just hauled off and slugged me. So I was very upset. So I came here very upset about being slugged at by a little kid for no reason at all. I just had to have it dawn on me, you know, I just had to work it out of my system by just talking it out. Getting it out of my system made me realize it wasn't really anything I did. The kid just happens to have problems, and I just happen to be (sic) the brunt of his problems.3

For others, justification was derived from learning that one's colleagues had similar problems, and in being told that what one is doing was acceptable to others:

> You figure you can listen to somebody else bitch about how awful their kids were and you feel better about it.
>
> I need somebody to give me the confidence, in telling me that I'm right in doing what I'm doing.

The overall effect was one of reaching consensual agreement that things are in fact manageable, that there is only so much one person can do, that no one's problems are unique, and of establishing a resolution to keep trying:

> It gives you incentive to go back and keep plugging. It does me some good. Perhaps the other people had the same problems, and you could discuss them and say that the kids were worth it. You know, take it easy with them, be firm, be strong. Just knowing other people have the same problems, and saying you'll go back and try another approach.

In summary, the setting at O'Keefe's did in fact serve the cathartic function suggested by the initial phase of data collection. The dynamics of this function involved an interaction with other adults, who shared the same experiences and feelings of tension and

frustration at the end of the week. The result was an establishment of common interpretations and understandings about what went on in school. Feelings were dispersed by being generalized to the larger group, which accepted the individual's feelings, approved them, and gave them legitimacy. In the process of doing so, the group also accepted and legitimized the teacher as a member of the collegial group, but probably imposed its own meanings to some degree on the events that gave rise to the teacher's need for cathartic release. What evidently occurred was a subtle socialization similar to what has been observed in faculty groups by others, yet with some unique variation.

This socialization process is somewhat different from that described by McPherson, who found that teachers rarely if ever let down their protective masks of emotional detachment in front of colleagues even outside of school.[4] What seems to have been occurring at O'Keefe's is still a socialization toward a conception of the self as an emotionally detached professional, as evidenced by the remarks of some of the more experienced teachers concerning their attitudes toward talking about students, but the emergence of a more affectively authentic self was tolerated to a greater degree than is indicated by other work on teacher socialization.[5]

Through their interactions with each other at O'Keefe's, teachers helped one another by creating a secure environment for the cathartic release of emotion for those who felt they needed it, followed by a closing of ranks around common interpretations and understandings of events at school. This closing of ranks also represented a closing off of the week's work, allowing teachers to pursue their private lives over the weekend with some of the burden of job related tension and frustration dispersed. By supporting, ac-

cepting, and justifying each other's experiences, the collegial group also seemed to prepare its members for resumption of the work cycle the following week.

The Job of Teaching

Forty-two responses to the question, "Is being here tonight in any way related to your job as a teacher?", were recorded, transcribed, and classified into four categories according to the predominant content of the response:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Organizational Constraints | - | 5 |
| Relationship to Self | - | 8 |
| Relationship to Students | - | 14 |
| Relationship to Adults | - | 15 |
| | | 42 Total |

The smallest number of teachers (5) believed that constraints imposed by the school organization, particularly those requiring uninterrupted activity and contact with students, amplified the pressures originating in the intensity of classroom interaction. Having no respite from the demands of the job, these teachers viewed O'Keefe's as an opportunity to relax at the end of the week:

> When you're teaching in front of a class, you're putting on a performance. And if you have no breaks, you're on for eight hours a day. I have no breaks.
>
> I wasn't one who felt this tired when I've worked in other jobs. I am physically exhausted and I'm mentally exhausted. I think it's never having that break. You've got a half hour for lunch. I've got six classes a day, I've got thirty new kids coming in every 35 minutes. Know their names, be able to relate to them, be able to teach them something. Unless you teach, I don't think you can understand the pressures of teaching. Because kids bring in their problems.

> When you're in school you're working under a set of rules, a schedule that you have to follow very strictly because you're depended on by students and by other people in the building.

These individuals found O'Keefe's relaxing because, "you don't have to be on constantly like you do when you're teaching," and because, "you don't have to be anywhere."

In contrast to the teachers who viewed their being at O'Keefe's as related to external constraints, a slightly larger number (8) spoke about a need to resolve intrapersonal conflict they experienced between themselves as human beings and the professional role they played at school. Most said that they saw O'Keefe's as simply an opportunity to be themselves. Socializing with colleagues made the transition from professional role to private life a little easier. For a few, however, going to O'Keefe's seemed to fill a temporary void experienced on Friday afternoon, suggesting a greater internal adjustment problem. A woman teacher said, for example:

> We get out of school so early that sometimes you just go home and you kind of don't do anything. You could just sit yourself down in front of a television set and become a non-entity, and become nothing. And this way at least you're interacting with people.

A male teacher similarly noted:

> Before I came to O'Keefe's, I'm not much on drinking, actually I can't drink, but I used to go home, turn off all the lights, and turn on the stereo, and lie down and force myself to relax. But this is just another way.

Another said:

> I feel very emotionally tired at the end of the day. I don't know who I am by the end of the week.

The majority of responses involved references to interpersonal relationships the teachers encountered at school. Approximately half (14) of these referred specifically to students. Teachers generally described their jobs as highly rewarding yet very frustrating. They placed a high value on the

ability to "relate" to students. Both male and female teachers defined effectiveness with students similarly as:

> ...being able to relate to the children, giving them successful experiences, if they feel good when they're leaving, after forty-five minutes, that they've done something well.
>
> The whole thing deals with the rapport that you set up. If you get that, then you make a good teacher.

Teachers with several years experience occasionally expressed a fear and sometimes a feeling of no longer being able to "relate" to students and of closing them off. They suggested that at that point a teacher ought to leave the occupation.

Paradoxically, despite this emphasis on the importance of "relating" to students, most teachers perceived their role as requiring them to be considerably less than genuine in actual practice. They seemed to believe that the proper conditions for learning and socialization depended on their maintaining a social distance between them and their students. For some teachers this distancing appeared to be largely defensive and related to dicipline:

> When you're in the classroom you can't get too personal with them. You can't tell them where you live or things like that, because then they have an edge. You have to be so professional you know.

Control over students was not achieved, however, without some degree of internal conflict:

> It's not just necessarily teaching, it's dealing with the kids. I had to go from a very easy going personality to a very hard, strict personality, only to make my life a little easier.

Another source of distancing resulted from a belief expressed in several instances that it was part of the role of the teacher to represent an image

or model of superior morality to students. This pose also evidently caused difficulty when teachers did not live up to their own grandiose ideal. As one young woman explained:

> You have to stand up there and say, 'You kids shouldn't smoke, you shouldn't drink, you shouldn't smoke dope. And yet teachers do.

Both the disciplinarian pose and the model of morality pose seem derived from a concern with restrictive control; control of students on the one hand, and of oneself on the other. Generally teachers didn't seem comfortable with either, and reported that they occasionally let the role slip if for some reason they identified particularly strongly with a student. One teacher, for example, talked about inadvertently catching a student smoking in the lavatory that day and overlooking the incident despite school policy, because he suddenly remembered smoking in the lavatory himself when he was young. For another teacher, suppression of emotions and feelings of helplessness in response to her students' impoverished homes made her "feel a hundred years older," since she began teaching that year. Typically, however, the detachment was maintained and acknowledgement of the artificiality of the social environment of the classroom and school was suppressed until the end of the week:

> One kid's punching another one out, and you don't care. You know they won't hurt each other, but it's your responsibility to separate them. By Friday these things build up.
>
> You have to uphold an image of being a responsible adult. 'We're not going to fool around, we're very serious about what we're doing.' So when Friday comes, 'Let's go out and...
>
> I'm pretty young and I can relate to the kid's problems, and you're expected to be this model

> person, and you almost feel you are this model. When you go out with your friends you can be more yourself.

Part of the restrictiveness of the teaching role was associated with the child-centered culture of the school. Being at O'Keefe's represented an opportunity to escape from the responsiblility of being an adult among children:

> When the day is over I don't want to just go to my house. I don't have to be responsible, lay down rules all the time. I want adult conversations. I've done punctuation all day.
>
> During the week I restrict myself, I'm very straight, restricted, whatever it is you want to call it. And Friday nights, whether I do anything wild or not, it's just getting out. It's nice. It's getting away from... Like I said to Sandy once when we were out, I think we were here one night, and some little kids were running around and I said, 'Goodnight! Look at, see! You can't even go out, and they're here.

The responses of teachers who referred to their relationships to students seem to suggest that they feel somewhat ambivalent about the teaching role. They perceive it as requiring them to maintain an illusion for students that what is going on, who people are, and the behaviors expected in school are all worth taking seriously although they do not believe it themselves. The existence of this illusion, furthermore, seems to be constantly threatened from one side by students through their nonconforming behavior and personal problems, and from the other side by the feelings of teachers as human beings and the reality of their own private lives.

Limitations on genuine interpersonal interaction while in school, however, was not confined solely to students. The largest number (15) of teachers in fact referred to difficulties they encountered in interacting with other adults while at school.

Although a few blamed organizational constraints, most teachers suggested that these limitations on adult interaction were self imposed. Teachers portrayed the school as a place where the role of teacher is rarely if ever dropped, in sharp contrast to the atmosphere of O'Keefe's where people could talk and get to know each other on more than a superficial level:

> They sort of work themselves into their role of being a teacher, which is what it really is, you do get into that role. And you come in here, the only person you can be is yourself. You can be the teacher for the first ten, fifteen minutes, but after that you have to let yourself go...
>
> In school they're real strict, powerful people, and as soon as they come out, the front drops.
>
> Often these are various people you wouldn't even talk to at all in school, you just wave to them. So I find that to be a good thing. The opportunity doesn't arise in school. There's the factor of drinking making you more uninhibited. Put them together and that's what happens.

A student teacher described the teachers at O'Keefe's as "alot freer, alot looser, they show you themselves," a situation which she did not find true at school. She said she was frankly surprised to, "see teachers as people." With respect to one male colleague who became slightly inebriated and suddenly affectionate she said, "I was surprised, I thought he was, you know, a real teacher." Letting the role drop in front of colleagues was clearly temporary, however, a once a week occurrence. The professional role was reassumed on Monday morning:

> It's almost always a school centered conversation, but it's things you'd never talk about in school. The more they drink, the looser they get, and the more you let your frustrations and complaints come out. And I think it's a good thing. Then you can get to school on Monday and that same person does not talk to you at all about those things.

In summary, teachers described the classroom as a demanding yet fragile social reality which is continuously imperiled not only by student misbehavior, but also by intrapsychic conflicts teachers experienced involving: (1) identification with students' behaviors, (2) empathy for students' problems, and (3) conflict between the teachers' conception of their role and the reality of their private lives. Teachers also seemed to experience some internal conflict between the demands of their work and a desire to act irresponsibly. These conflicts are apparently dealt with through the psychological mechanism of splitting. A clear demarcation is drawn between the professional self and the real self, between being on and being off. This is obvious in the teachers' very conscious dropping of the role at the end of the week:

> I have to shed (my school), I just have to get rid of it.
>
> It's not that you don't like it, you just, that you want a little life a little bit.
>
> Basically, this is my escape. I just let it all hang out. That's the reason I come here. I'm so professional where I am, that when I come here, I feel very relaxed. You know, I can mingle with people, talk to someone, and I don't have to put on a front.

Being a "professional" for these teachers, thus, represents the capacity to successfully maintain working relationships with other people at school while remaining essentially aloof and emotionally uninvolved. This "professional" role seems to be further subdivided into an all good "model of morality" pose, and a mean and nasty "disciplinarian" pose, with one or the other sometimes predominating in certain individuals. This splitting of the teacher's identity is apparently activated by an attempt to protect the artificial social realities of the classroom and school from intrusions of the outside world. Not surprisingly, this schitzophrenic manner of dealing with the situation[5] seems to have some serious ramifications for the teacher's

relationship to himself and to other adults. Interaction with colleagues at O'Keefe's, a setting which in many ways in itself represents a polar opposite of the school organization,[7] evidently helped teachers to maintain these conflicting self images, and made the transition from the professional role to the real self somewhat easier.

Discussion

Some fifty years ago Waller addressed the issue of what teaching does to teachers.[8] He described an occupation which systematically limited the emotional and intellectual development of its incumbents through strict conservative community norms governing teacher behavior, and through more subtle psychological influences inherent in the role itself.[9] The mechanism uniting these forces was the social distance teachers experienced between themselves and both students and community members.[10] This social isolation from normal interpersonal relationships, Waller believed, interfered with teachers' psycho-social growth. He argued that this stunting of the teacher as a person was ultimately harmful to the personality development of students as well, and presented a major obstacle to humanistic reform of the schools.[11]

Waller proposed a two pronged solution to the problem. First, an event which he considered unlikely but which he felt was needed, was the dissolution of the teacher stereotype, and community acceptance of the teacher as a normal human being capable of minor vices and lapses of decorum without having to face unusually harsh public censure. The second proposal called for psychiatric work in schools in order to deal directly with the deleterious outcomes of the occupation on the teachers' psyches.[12]

The fact that the present study was conducted in a barroom, itself indicates that teachers have considerably more freedom today to develop a private life than was possible in Waller's time.[13] This circumstance did not come about, however, because of a sudden unified rebellion on the part of teachers, but rather is the result of gradual changes in the values of society itself. Particularly in metropolitan areas, where tolerance and anonymity prevail, teachers are far less subject to the community's critical vigilance, rumor mill, and sanctions.

Ironically, this unheralded and accidental liberation of teachers from the constraints of parochial attitudes doesn't seem to have significantly improved their adjustment to the role. Many of the behaviors exhibited, and the feelings and concerns teachers expressed at O'Keefe's are in fact very similar to those described by Waller a half century ago. Waller noted the existence of informal fellowships of "young, well-educated, mostly unmarried, transient, and discontented," teachers in many towns, for example, who, not unlike the participants at O'Keefe's, offered each other a unique opportunity to "be spontaneous and relatively unreserved."[14] Then, as now, the restrictions and formality of the work situation prevented teachers somehow from experiencing intimate relationships with their colleagues while at school. In their contact with one another off the job, teachers of the 1930's typically talked shop, and particularly about their relationships with students. As in the present study, such interaction provided teachers with sympathy and understanding, was instrumental in the socialization of beginning teachers, and gave subgroup sanction to teacher interpretations and attitudes toward students, events at school, and the general community.[15] It would seem that the relationships of the teacher to the role and toward colleagues

has changed very little in the past fifty years.

The data from this study suggest at least two reasons for this stability in the relationships between teachers and their role and between teachers and each other. Both are rooted in a restrictive tendency toward inflexibility which seems to develop almost spontaneously. The first reason is that the superordinate/subordinate relationship between teachers and students has seemingly not changed appreciably. According to Waller, this relationship is the source of the greatest impact of the occupation on the individual.[16] Although teachers make rapid changes from one pose to another in order to adapt to different individuals and the mercurial mood swings of the classroom group, teachers more often than not develop restrictive inflexible attitudes and personalities.[17] The explanation for this apparent paradox is that teachers are faced with the necessity of controlling their students as well as teaching them which, after a few "traumatic" experiences where kindness and permissiveness are betrayed, soon becomes the teacher's primary concern.[18] Spontaneity and feelings are suppressed, and the teacher's repetoire of behaviors relative to the classroom group becomes increasingly controlled and mechanical. This reserved, inhibited, and restrictive set of behaviors eventually dominates the teacher's personality, and characterizes his or her relationships with adults as well.[19] The teachers interviewed at O'Keefe's spoke to this point very clearly in their perceptions of the relationship they had with students, the behavioral changes they were required to undertake as a result, and the maintenance of reserved, restricted, attitudes toward

themselves during the week and among colleagues while at school.

The second reason for the lack of change in the relationship of teachers to their role and in the interactions of teachers with colleagues is that the teacher stereotype as an unrelenting bastion of firmness, certainty, and morality[20] evidently still flourishes in the hearts and minds of teachers, despite the fact that it is compromised in practice and that it has probably already gone out of vogue in the general community. The unavoidable contradiction between this grandiose idealistic role and the teacher's own behavior off the job, and between this role and the student's experiences with the real world outside of school, make it almost impossible to maintain the artificial social reality of the classroom where minor infractions are treated as major offenses, and where painstaking attention to detail is considered a worthwhile activity. With a poorly defined technology and a weakly organized collegial network, teachers are left with only professional objectivity to rely on, which becomes almost a caricature of itself in the desparate attempt to insure that the school culture is not further threatened by careless expressions of feelings.

Unfortunately there doesn't seem to be a simple remedy for this chronic inflexibility. Any permanent solution, of course, would require that the discrepancy between teachers' perceptions of their professional roles and their real selves somehow be diminished, allowing teachers to be either more professional or more themselves. One facet of the teacher's identity could conceivably be expanded until it encompassed or entirely consumed the other. According to a humanistic scenario, for example, the restrictive culture of the school and with it the traditional role of teacher would be replaced with prevailing societal attitudes. Teachers and students would

cooperate as equal partners rather than as role incumbents. With coercive and nonvoluntary policies and procedures abandoned, teachers would act as helpers or coordinators of learning experiences designed to satisfy the fleeting intellectual and emotional needs of their individual clients.

An alternative scenario would involve expansion of the professional role into the broader community, thereby harmonizing the teacher's conceptions of his identity both inside and outside of the school. Teachers could gain greater influence over the experiences their students encounter outside the classroom, for example, by interacting and cooperating more closely with entire families, perhaps acting as dispensers of social services in order to deal with cultural and socio-economic differences among students.

But experience has shown that major and widespread reorganization in the schools is unlikely. One reason is that externally imposed solutions fail to deal with the intrapsychic conflicts of teachers which underly this resistance to change. Perhaps a more realistic and practical approach in this case is to accept the situation as given and, taking Waller's advice seriously, to begin treating the symptoms. Some teachers, at least, have evidently begun trying to help each other work through the internal conflicts they experience with respect to their roles as they currently exist. If more than cathartic release and socialization into traditional patterns of adjustment are to occur, however, a psychoanalytic conceptualization of the school and the teaching occupation is probably needed.[21] Rather than relying on psychiatrists, a uniquely educational model of therapy ought to be developed and employed as the first step toward change. The findings of this study suggest that a likely focal point may be the dynamics of interpersonal interaction. Until a therapy for the schools is developed, and perhaps applied by

teachers themselves in formal collegial problem solving groups, the schools are likely to continue their involuntary and inflexible cyclic repetition. Alternatives to repression and splitting need to be developed for dealing with the internal conflicts felt by teachers, as a solution to the stress and burnout problems, and before a more natural social order in the school can be hoped for.

References


1. Davis, M.D. "The Affective Parameters of Becoming a Teacher of Young Children," Educational Record, Spring, 1980.

2. Ryan, K., et.al. "The Stages of Teaching: New Perspectives on Staff Development for Teachers' Needs," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1979.

3. This particular anecdote with its misspoken "bear the brunt," illustrates remarkably well an observation made by Waller concerning the process by which teachers learn from traumatic experiences encountered on the job: "Usually a curiously bifurcated adjustment appears. On the one hand, the individual refuses to accept the responsibility for the shocking event and that part of his behavior which led up to it...On the other hand, the individual behaves as if he accepted responsibility completely, something which he does not find at all inconsistent with his conscious insistence that it was not his fault." Waller, W. The Sociology of Teaching, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1976, p. 399.

4. McPherson, G.H. Small Town Teacher. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972, p.74-75.

5. For example: Eddy, E.M. Becoming a Teacher. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1969.

6. Parker related ways of spending leisure time to the characteristics of various occupations. (Parker, S.R. "Work and Non-work in Three Occupations." Sociological Review, 1965, 13, p.65-75) He found that groups such as child care workers who derive intrinsic rewards from their jobs tended to spend their leisure in ways that were actually extensions of their work. Among occupations that are tedious and dangerous, however, he found that individuals spend their leisure time recuperating by pursuing pasttimes that contrasted sharply with their work. Individuals in occupations which are neither particularly rewarding nor taxing, were most flexible in their use of time off the job, feeling no need to develop themselves professionally nor to compensate for their work during leisure hours. Teachers in the present study, curiously enough, seem to fit in both the first and second categories, that is, during the week they claimed to devote most of their leisure time to their work, but spent the weekends and vacations relaxing and recuperating.

7. Blumberg, A. and Kleinke, D. "Factors Associated with Frequenting a 'Teacher Bar'," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, 1980.

8. Waller, W. The Sociology of Teaching, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1976.

9. Ibid., p.421 and 445. Sarason similarly notes that teachers rarely experience a "sense of personal or intellectual growth." Sarason, S. The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1971, p.164.

10. Waller, Sociology, p.59-60.

11. Ibid., p.445-46 and p.458.

12. Ibid., p. 242, p. 433, and p. 454-58.

13. Ibid, p. 60-61. Waller discusses the utility of minor vices in making one seem more human.

14. Ibid., p. 56.

15. Ibid, p. 57, p. 423, and p. 430-32.

16. Ibid., p. 383.

17. Ibid., p. 230-and p. 384-86. Sarason also notes this "chameleon-like" ability among teachers to quickly "change thought, feeling, and action." Sarason, S. The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1971, p.168.

18. Waller, Sociology, p. 399-400.

19. Ibid., p. 392-98 and p. 428-31.

20. Ibid., p. 357. This perspective is consistent the "craftsman type of education" described by Gracey, which prescribes a "positive identification rather than arbitrary adult authority as a social control mechanism." Gracey, H.L. Curriculum or Craftsmanship. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972, p. 47.

21. Although little work has been done along these lines, some examples of psychoanalytic conceptualizations include: Wright, B.D. and Tuska, S.A. "From Dream to Life in the Psychology of Becoming a Teacher," School Review, 76, Sept. 1968, p.253-93. Tyler, L.L. "The Utilization of Psychoanalytic Concepts for Assessing Classroom Transaction," The Journal of Educational Research, 60, Feb. 1967, p.260-66.

Appendix

Notes on Research Methods and Procedures

Assumptions Guiding Inquiry Into Meaning

The research methods used in this study reflect symbolic interaction theory, and are grounded on the works of C. H. Cooley, John Dewey, W. I. Thomas and George Herbert Mead. Although several varieties in interaction thory exist, Meltzer et al.[1] point out that all hold certain premises in common. These include the notions that human behavior is based on the meanings attributed to things, that meanings are a product of social communication and that they result from the interpretive processes employed by individuals. Thus, research into meaning seeks to describe things from the viewpoint of those individuals studied.

Bruyn[2] suggests that symbolic interaction theory guides the researcher to address the processes through which people create meanings and act toward things on the basis of these meanings. The general research question is: "How do meanings arise and shape the socio-cultural world of a given setting?"

The concept of meaning is itself ambiguous. Yet for most symbolic interactionists, meaning is viewed as "value infused facts of society." Meaning is a fusion of observable social patterns (facts) and expressive symbols (values). In a word, meaning is the interpretation given any particular social act. Interactionists believe that through intensive participation with subjects in a setting, it is poossible to uncover cultural meanings. It is further believed that the meanings uncovered in the study of

one group may be basic to human existence and therefore help illuminate human behavior in other settings.

Within interaction theory, meaning is rooted in the dynamic interpretive processes of a given socio-cultural system. Behaviors, which result from the way people interpret (define) reality, are considered "creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as the interact"[3](p. 101. Bogdan and Taylor[4] state

> People are constantly in a process of interpretation and definition as they move from one situation to another. . .All situations consist of the actor, others and their actions, and physical objects. In any case, a situation has meaning only through people's interpretations and definitions of it. Their actions, in turn, stem from this meaning. Thus, the process of interpretation acts as the intermediary between any predisposition to act and the action itself.(p. 14).

Symbolic interactionists focus on the patterns or structures of meaning which emerge through a given group's defining processes. They expect that since group life consists of people acting to meet the demands of the situation, they may develop "shared definitions." Not suprisingly, even formal structures are not seen to function automatically because of some inner dynamic. While not rejecting the idea that enduring patterns of human interaction develop over time, Blumer[3] writes "a network or organization. . .functions because people at different points do something and what they do is a result of how they define the situation in which they are called on to act" (19). Along these same lines, Bogdon and Taylor[4] state "While people may act within the framework of an organization, it is the interpretation and not the organization which determines action. Social roles, norms, values and goals may set condition and consequences for action, but do not determine what a person will do." (p. 15)

Unstructured Interviews

It is generally accepted that the use of unstructured interviewing is suitable to an investigation of the empirical world, especially when the

researcher's aim is to study meanings and the processes through which meanings develop in a particular social setting. Given this, unstructured interviews were employed in the conduct of this research. This allowed the researchers to enter the defining processes of the teachers involved in this study and to probe for the essential meanings of their behavior in a teacher bar.


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2. Bruyn, Severyn. The Human Perspective in Sociology: The Methodology of Participant Observation. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey; Prentice Hall, Inc., 1966.

3. Blumer, Herbert. Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey; Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969.

4. Bogdan, Robert and Taylor, Steven J. Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods: A Phenomenological Approach to the Social Sciences. New York; John Wiley and Sons, 1975.